



# 7 Days to a Flat Belly

Prevention

# 7 DAYS TO A FLAT BELLY

*Just 4 moves and a little cardio will flatten your belly fast.*

**T**hanks to 5 decades of research and nearly 90 studies, scientists have zeroed in on the best moves to flatten your belly. The secret is to really fatigue your abs—not an easy task, because they’re used to working all day to keep you standing tall. But we created a routine that, when combined with regular cardio, does it in just 4 moves.

We know for sure because we had nearly a dozen women road-test the program as part of our *Prevention*



Fitness Lab. “I couldn’t believe the difference a few days made,” says Gwen Hoover, 48, of Fogelsville, PA, who whittled more than 2 inches off her middle, lost 14% of her belly fat, and dropped nearly 4 pounds in just 1 week! Even our slimmest testers saw impressive results.

At 5'6" and 125 pounds, Rachelle Vander Schaaf, 49, of Macungie, PA, wasn’t expecting to see a big change; but she shaved more than 3 inches off her belly—without dieting.

You can, too!

## PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

**3 DAYS A WEEK** Do the 4-move Lose the Pooch Workout, (p. 13) on 3 nonconsecutive days to tone your midsection.

**5 DAYS A WEEK** Do 30 to 40 minutes of cardio, such as brisk walking, swimming, jogging, or bike riding, to burn off belly fat. You should be breathing hard but still able to talk in short sentences.

**EVERY DAY** Watch portions and fill up on whole grains, vegetables, fruits, lean protein, and healthy fats to maximize results. Aim for 1,600 to 1,800 calories spread evenly throughout the day.

SAMPLE WORKOUT SCHEDULE	
DAY	ACTIVITY
Monday	Abs & Cardio
Tuesday	Cardio
Wednesday	Rest
Thursday	Abs & Cardio
Friday	Rest
Saturday	Abs & Cardio
Sunday	Cardio

## LOSE THE POOCH WORKOUT

Do 3 sets of each move, performing as many reps (1 second up, 1 second down) as possible until you feel a burning sensation in the muscles you’re working or you can no longer maintain proper form. Rest 15 seconds between sets. You’ll likely be able to do more reps during earlier sets and exercises—that’s OK. After you can do 50 reps or hold a plank for 2 minutes for most sets, try the harder variations, change the order of the exercises, or do the moves after another type of workout.



### 1. HIPLESS CRUNCH

**Targets:** abs by preventing hips and upper body from helping you lift

Lie on back with legs lifted and bent, calves parallel to floor, and feet relaxed. Cross arms over chest with hands on shoulders. Contract abdominal muscles and lift head, shoulders, and upper back off floor. Lower without touching head to floor. Exhale as you lift; inhale as you lower.

**MAKE IT EASIER** Rest calves on a chair and extend arms down at sides.

**MAKE IT HARDER** Extend legs straight up.

\* Prevention Fitness Lab testers averaged 25 reps per set.

### TIPS

- Don’t pull chin toward chest
- Focus on abs doing the work; imagine sliding rib cage toward hips

### Stop when:

- You start pulling or jerking up with head, neck, or shoulders
- You can’t keep neck or shoulders relaxed





## 2. NO-HANDS REVERSE CRUNCH

**Targets:** more belly muscles by anchoring arms overhead instead of keeping arms at sides, where they can help

Lie faceup with arms overhead and hands grasping a heavy piece of furniture or railing. Raise feet into the air with legs bent. Contract abs, press back into floor, and lift hips off floor. Exhale as you lift; inhale as you lower.

**MAKE IT EASIER** Do the move with arms down at sides.

**MAKE IT HARDER** Straighten legs.

### TIPS

- Feel the contraction in abs, not in back or legs
- Tilt pelvis
- Think of lifting up instead of pulling knees toward chest

#### Stop when:

- You can't lift hips off floor without jerking
- Neck and shoulders are tense



## 3. V CRUNCH

**Targets:** muscle in your midsection by getting the upper and lower body to move simultaneously

Balance on tailbone with legs bent, feet off floor, and arms bent at sides. Make sure back is straight and chest is lifted. Lean back and extend arms and legs, then pull back to start position.

**MAKE IT EASIER** Grasp sides of thighs with hands.

**MAKE IT HARDER** Hold a 3- to 5-pound dumbbell in each hand.

### TIPS

- Eyes gaze straight forward; keep chin parallel to floor
- Don't let back curve or shoulders rise toward ears

#### Stop when:

- You can't keep arms or legs up
- You can't keep chest lifted
- Back or neck starts to hurt

50  
YEARS  
OF FLAT  
ABS

Workouts to flatten belly bulge have changed plenty over the last half century, but each ab evolution brought us one step closer to the ultraeffective routine we're using today. Here is a look back at the most popular belly busters.

**'60s/'70s: Old-School Situp**

**'80s: The Crunch**

**'90s/'00s: Plank Pose**

**Today: The Slim Belly Workout**

It targets only the topmost belly muscle (the rectus abdominis), and your hip muscles do a lot of the lifting. Straight-leg versions are also particularly tough on the back.

When studies revealed that the first 30% of a situp engages abs the most, crunches became popular. But good form is key: feet off the floor; don't pull on your head.

This Pilates move may work abs harder than crunches, but done alone, it may not fully fatigue abs. Planks rely on smaller muscles that often tire more quickly.

**IT WORKS!** Researchers placed electrodes (like those used for EKGs) on the bellies of hundreds of people as they crunched, balanced, and twisted to find the most effective moves.



#### 4. SIDE PLANK

**Targets: deepest abs. Do them after crunches to ensure complete fatigue—and firm abs from every angle.**

Lie on right side, elbow beneath shoulder, feet stacked, left hand on hip. Contract abs to lift hip and leg off floor. Hold until fatigued, noting your time. Do 3 sets before switching sides.

**MAKE IT EASIER** Bend legs and balance on bottom knee and side of lower leg.

**MAKE IT HARDER** Straighten top arm toward sky.

**THE EXPERT** *Tony Caterisano, PhD, exercise scientist and professor in the department of health sciences at Furman University, designed this workout.*

#### TIPS

- Keep head, neck, torso, hips, and legs all in one straight line
- Don't sink into shoulder—press elbow into floor and lift torso

#### Stop when:

- Hip is sagging toward floor
- Neck, shoulder, or back hurts.
- You can't keep body in line

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Before you undertake a new health program or fitness regimen, we encourage you to discuss your plans with your health care professional, especially if you have not exercised for several years, are over 35, or are overweight.

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## Can Fragrance Peel Off Pounds?

In a study done by Alan Hirsch, MD, neurological director of the Smell and Taste Treatment and Research Foundation in Chicago, people who smelled green apple, banana, or peppermint several times daily lost an average of 30 pounds in 6 months. "We think the scents may curb cravings," Hirsch says.